

## Campione and Study Meeting

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Kusanagi Godou was a Devil King who had slain a god.

Also known as a Campione, existences feared by many for the trouble they brought.

However, above being a great Devil King, Godou was first and foremost a high school student.

Even though his everyday life was often embroiled in conflicts between gods and Devil Kings, he was still convinced that a student's responsibilities should be fulfilled to the best of his ability.

A student's responsibilities. Namely, studying.

"Due to the commotion caused by Gascoigne and Lancelot, my exam revision didn't make any progress at all."

On the very last day of November, Godou grumbled with a pained expression.



The second school term was coming to an end. In Jounan Academy's high school division, end of term examinations were scheduled during the first week of December. Nevertheless, Godou had been exceptionally busy lately.

First there was the school festival. Next came Athena's second invasion. Then there was Divine Ancestor Guinevere scheming behind the scenes.

Furthermore, there was the incident of Alexandre Gascoigne stealing the Heavenly Reverse Halberd.

After travelling all the way to England in search of him, Godou could not have expected the floating island commotion happening in Tokyo Bay. In addition, there was the deadly duel against Lancelot, the war god of the lance...

The natural result was the neglect of his studies.

In terms of preparedness for his end of term exams, Godou's condition was the furthest thing away from being ready.

"This may be starting a bit late, but surely I must put forth my full effort into studying."

Fully determined, Godou declared as if making an oath. This caused Erica to laugh beside him as if disparaging his resolve.

This happened to be a lunch break with fair weather when "the usual faces," Godou, Erica, Yuri and Liliana were gathered in the courtyard, having lunch.

"By this point, it's not like putting in effort is your only choice, right? Given Godou's situation, your academic results will not have much bearing on your future life."

"Come on... I have no wish to leave behind unpleasant high school memories like failing or being kept back a grade."

More than that, he had no intention of writing down "Devil King" as his profession either.

However, Erica continued to smile with delight.

"No problem. Godou, if you believe that graduating in Japanese schools will be hard, then come over to study abroad in Europe and aim for the universities there afterwards. There are quite a number of schools that collaborate with the [Copper Black Cross]. It can be arranged for you any time."

"Even now, I have no intention of moving abroad."

"Then how about I assist you with [Instruction] magic? That will basically allow you to memorize all the textbooks easily, right?"

"It's not like I'm fighting a god, I can't cheat like that!"

Refusing the devil's proposal, Godou turned to his other companions.

"Everyone else's grades are so good. Looks like you won't be having any problems with the upcoming exams?"

"I should not have any problems with any basic education or humanities subjects..."

Liliana replied with a gloomy expression.

"But I am not very talented at mathematics and the sort of subject known as physics. Even though I try to study it whenever I have time, I cannot say I am making much progress..."

I see, so Liliana was the kind of person completely disposed towards the humanities. Godou nodded.

In a certain sense, Godou believed this disposition was rather fitting for a "witch" living in the world of magic and fantasy.

"Erica and Liliana's knowledge of history and related subjects is especially detailed."

Let alone history and archaeology, these unusual teenaged girls were even knowledgeable in comparative cultural studies.

Furthermore, they even did well in Japanese language subjects like modern literature, ancient literature and annotated literary Chinese. It was as if they were trying to put to shame the other students in the class whose mother tongue was Japanese.

"But Erica, you too have subjects you are not good at, right? Are you properly prepared?"

"That is a stupid question, you know, Lily."

Erica smiled mischievously in response to Liliana's question.

"You are talking about me, Erica Blandelli, here. Even though I can devote any amount of time to research things I find interesting... I have no intention of wasting any leisure on trying to find positive meaning in those inorganic symbols and mathematical formulae."

"Ah... In other words, you haven't done anything."

"Yes. No matter what grades my examinations end up being, nothing should affect me as a person. Letting nature take its course is fine with me."

Erica responded to Godou's mutterings with effortless composure.

The strength of this unshakable ego, could it be considered enlightenment? Or rather, one should describe it as impressive egocentrism.

"Ah, speaking of which. Mariya spent a lot of time investigating Lancelot. Even though I am sorry for asking this late, will it affect your studying for exams?"

Recalling that, Godou instantly apologized.

In order to seek the origins of the mysterious war god, Yuri and Princess Alice had spent quite a few days in Europe.

However, the Hime-Miko generously accepted the apology.

"Please do not let it weigh on your mind. After all, I never do special studying for exams during normal school days. It is completely fine."

"Eh, really?"

"Really."

Yuri had been listening quietly to Godou's conversation about exams with the rest.

Watching the gentle Yamato Nadeshiko's calm and modest smile, doubt appeared in Godou's mind.

"Could it be true, that not only are Mariya's grades fine, they are actually very good?"

"--! I-I do not consider them bad."

An evasive answer.

Normally, only a person with bad grades would answer in that manner. But considering Yuri's serious honors student aura and conscientiousness, the actual truth was probably the opposite.

Clearly thinking the same thing, Erica joined into the conversation.

"Although such inquisitiveness is rather unladylike... I am very curious about this."

"Indeed. If her grades were ordinary, Mariya Yuri should be responding more calmly."

Prompted by the red and blue knights, Godou asked:

"So what were your grades for the midterm exams? But it's fine, you don't have to tell us if you don't want to."

The three looked towards the Hime-Miko together. Yuri shyly lowered her gaze and softly whispered "...What were they?"

In complete contrast to her shy tone of voice, the grades she divulged approached perfection in every subject.

"Even if you consider the entire year group, those grades would still get you into the top five..."

"Whenever Yuri gets serious, looks like you always get these kinds of grades..."

As Liliana and Erica exclaimed with admiration, Godou could not help but mutter.

"Amazing. That's similar to Sorimachi's grades."

"Ah... Is that so?"

"Yeah. That guy, despite the way he acts, actually has really good grades."

" "Eh?!" "

As Yuri acknowledged casually, Erica and Liliana expressed shock.

"Wait a minute, Godou. That name you just mentioned -- you are referring to that person in our class?"

"The one who keeps going on and on about little sisters and maid cafes?"

"Of course. That guy Sorimachi's grades are actually good enough to be number one in our year... But I can understand your surprise for sure."

"This guy, I remember him being part of the group nicknamed..."

"The Three Idiots, apparently they are regarded as that..."

"Well, they are idiots in behavior and personality, that's for sure..."

Erica and Liliana displayed surprise as if confronted with some sort of illogical fact.

This could very well be Godou's first time seeing them so puzzled within school. Getting a strange feeling from this unexpected occurrence, Godou continued.

"By the way, I think Nanami is actually smarter than me. Takagi, on the other hand, seems to have similar grades as me?"

Godou suddenly realized something as he listed out the names of his classmates the Three Idiots.

"It might actually be a good idea to study together with these smart guys before future exams. It's about time I stay away from all those violent incidents and focus my attention and energy towards endeavors fitting for a high school student."

"Then let alone the future, why don't you do that for this upcoming exam as well?"

Questioned by Erica, Godou began to smile wryly.

"The end of term exams will be here in a few days. It'd be kind of awkward for them if someone requests something like that so suddenly. After all, they should be focusing on their own studying..."

As soon as he finished his sentence, Godou realized. Come to think of it, wasn't there an excellent student who clearly said she "did not do special studying for exams" right here?

Erica was already looking at her when she made her suggestion.

Realizing the intent of Erica's gaze, Liliana and Godou looked towards Yuri. Enduring the stares of the three, the humble high-class young lady squirmed uncomfortably.

"So Yuri, as the one furthest along the academic path, I hope you can provide us with some guidance, how's that?"

"U-Ummm, guidance would be too arrogant a description..."

"Can't we hold a study meeting? To be honest, I have completely no desire to spend any time preparing for exams. However, working in cooperation

towards a common goal like this once in a while would be an exciting and interesting change."

Hearing such a typical Erica-style comment, Godou began to smile wryly.

However, to this point they had apparently never collaborated on study activities -- perhaps Yuri also realized the same thing.

Smiling with a chuckle, Yuri spoke gently.

"Although I am not sure how much I may be of help... I am sure studying hard together with everyone will be quite enjoyable."

After school, the quartet left school together to hold an emergency study meeting.

"Where should we go? Maybe my home or Erica's apartment would be nice?"

"During times like these, Japanese students usually congregate in the eateries near the school, right?"

Liliana answered as Godou sought everyone's opinion just as they left the school gates.

"Yeah. Family restaurants, fast food places or the like."

"Then no matter what, we should try to emulate this kind of custom, right? As the saying goes, when in Rome, do as the Romans do."

Liliana suggested as if her playful spirit had been roused by the study meeting plan.

"Speaking of which, I do occasionally visit those kinds of shops with the members of the tea ceremony club."

"If the purpose was to savor the food, I would avoid those types of places lacking in individuality. But following this line of thought sounds agreeable. I will second Liliana's motion."

Yuri's eyes flashed slightly with excitement and Erica nodded and supported the idea openly.

Godou could do nothing but smile awkwardly as the core purpose of their gathering shifted from "study" to "meeting." However, he did not object. It

would be a bit too tasteless to expect concrete benefits from a last-minute study meeting held just before the exams.

The important thing was the fact of "everyone gathering to study together."

Be that as it may--

The three girls, Erica, Yuri and Liliana, all seemed to lead lives that seldom brought them into contact with fast food shops and the like.

From the series of statements just now, the nature of their private lives could be easily deduced.

Just as he expected, the girls were slightly different from "ordinary." Godou nodded to himself.

Hence, the princess, the high-class young lady and the knight who had been training magic, spirit powers or the like since childhood could be considered a group. Consequently, it was Godou's mission as the high school student representative of ordinary people to assist them today--

Godou secretly resolved himself.

Cutting to the chase, the quartet made the rounds amongst the various family restaurants and fast food places near the school.

But things did not go well.

No matter which shop they went to, all were packed with students from Jounan Academy. There was no room for Godou and his group at all. Considering that exams were imminent, it was only natural for there to be many groups executing their plans of "gathering friends to hold a study meeting."

"It can't be helped, let's go to my house instead."

The journey from the school to the Kusanagi home took fifteen minutes on foot.

Although he thought this was a reasonable substitute, Erica shook her head decisively.

"No. We have to stick to our plan. If we take the train to another area, shouldn't we be able to find unoccupied shops?"

Instantly, Godou recalled the saying, "putting the cart before the horse."



After forty minutes, Godou muttered with deep feeling.

"Who could have expected a day like this..."

The quartet had gone to Ueno from Jounan Academy at Nezu.

However, all the fast food places and family restaurants in the station's neighborhood felt rather noisy and crowded.

One shop was filled with old men and women. All of them were dressed for traveling, probably having just gotten off a bus or something, in the middle of taking a break.

Another shop, on the other hand, was filled with lively young men and women in their twenties and thirties.

Accidentally overhearing the subject of their vigorous conversation, it seemed like they were members of a small drama troupe. After a public performance, they were having a pre-party before heading to a Izakaya.<sup>[1]</sup>

There were other shops that they visited.

One had a group of young men and women, roughly ten in number, with a large amount of manuscripts spread out on the tables, using staplers to assemble them into booklets. Glancing from a distance, one could see the pages were filled with what appeared to be manga illustrations and panels.

This was apparently the production of doujinshi -- the binding of copies.

Clearly there was a great amount of freedom as to what people were allowed to do in the shop, displaying the scene of a fast food place in a prosperous neighborhood. Speaking of which, Ueno was right next to Akihabara, the origin of the doujinshi.

"Although it looks like we should be able to find a shop that can accomodate us four, spending time on this search would prove rather pointless."

Why don't we just give up and go to my house to start the study meeting?

Erica was the first to refute what Godou was about to propose.

"So, let's simply get a hotel room."

This sounded like novelists or manga artists of old who would work on their manuscripts in this manner.



Godou was about to object when others did it for him.

"Eh, Erica-san, this is only the study meeting of students, going to that kind of place would seem..."

"The cost-effectiveness is far too dismal. This is clearly a waste."

Yuri cautiously expressed disagreement as Liliana warned with displeasure.

I see. Godou was struck by a revelation.

Yuri and Liliana both shopped at supermarkets and did their own cooking. Consequently, compared to Erica who grew up as a sheltered high-class lady, their sense of spending was closer to a normal person's. Contrasting with the typical high school girl whose cooking experience was zero, perhaps they were more principled in this area.

Ignoring Godou who nodded in agreement, Erica smiled tenderly.

"But consider this. Given this expenditure, we not only avoid wasting time, but also get a chance to study hard together, working on a group collaborative effort we have never tried before. In light of that, I think it is money well spent, is it not?"

That's not right, this is clearly using money impertinently, okay?

Just as Godou was about to object, he was shocked. Erica's rhetoric actually worked!

"Perhaps that is true..."

Saying that, Yuri bowed her head in thought. Even Liliana went:

"Well, I admit this idea is 10% reasonable..."

Muttering with a bitter expression. I see. Godou was struck with yet another revelation.

Even if their sense of spending was closer to a normal person's, it was still not the same. Hence, they were beginning to waver as a result of Erica's words. Also, one more thing.

They all seemed to be putting forth all their effort, trying to turn this "study meeting" into some kind of extraordinary event.

At the same time, he also discovered something else. These girls, whose lives were often removed from the ordinary, had no intention of wasting precious times of peace on school activities. Struck with a strange sense of relief somehow, Godou decided to play along in this situation.

That said, using a hotel would be a bit too much.

"Wait a minute, there's a shop nearby that's opened by someone I know. Let me try asking him if we could borrow the place. Then we shouldn't have to waste money unnecessarily..."

Godou took out his cellphone.

Even though this alternative plan had its own issues, the tradeoffs were worth it.

In order to resolve the emergency, Godou decided to rely on the power of an acquaintance. Also, he was hoping this could make everybody happy--

Several hours later, the study meeting concluded peacefully without incident.

The place they borrowed was the "shop" opened by an acquaintance and happened to be closed for the day. There, they studied for their exams with Yuri as their center. Consulting one another whenever they encountered things they did not understand, they copied borrowed notes and occasionally engaged in idle chatter and laughter.

Oh well, who knew how many marks their grades improved through these few hours of studying, nevertheless, Erica, Yuri and Liliana, as well as Godou himself, all spent a fulfilling time together.

"So, to return the favor to the owner, let me stay behind to clean up. You girls can go first."

Godou told his companions as he took out the cleaning equipment from the closet.

In actual fact, this was the shop where Godou worked part time, which explained why he was extremely familiar with where everything was located.

Since the shopkeeper-owner had given him a spare key in the past, they were able to enter the shop which was closed today (of course, he obtained consent over the phone first).

"Godou-san, we want to help clean up too..."

"Before we do that, I would like to confirm a few things first. May I?"

Yuri and Liliana suddenly exchanged glances and asked Godou.

"This shop is the place where you work. Also, you are trusted to the level of the shopkeeper handing you a spare key. Is this really fine?"

Godou nodded to confirm Liliana's question.

"Yes. Yanagi-san already said before. The shopkeeper of this place is currently busy."

Godou had heard that a friend of Yanagi-san's was opening a shop offering wine and western cuisine in half a month's time.

It seemed to be an old acquaintance Yanagi-san knew from his days as fellow bartender trainees. In order to assist him in this critical challenge in life, Yanagi-san decided to help prepare the menu.

Which was why Yanagi-san frequently traveled to the place where his friend's shop was set to open.

He often had to stay there overnight and hence neglected his own shop. Realizing this, Yanagi-san had made a spare key and entrusted it to the shop's only male employee.

'Whenever I'm late, could you please do the opening preparations?'

'Sure, no problem. But is it really okay to give a key to a student who only works part time? There's no guarantee I won't do anything bad, right?'

'Hoho. I'm sure Godou-kun won't do those kinds of things, right?'

No matter what, Godou was not going to confess his various crimes against famous tourist attractions and historical sites all over the world.

Faced with the dashing smile displayed by Yanagi-san, Godou felt rather anxious and unsettled.

'Besides, aren't there university kids who work part time as shopkeepers too? I have that experience too. Godou-kun counts as that kind of situation.'

'Umm... I'm still a high school student currently.'

'No problem. Your resume here at our shop has been written "in that way" already.'

Yanagi-san cheerfully revealed his crime of forgery.

'In fact, you are welcome to come and have fun before opening time, and stay for the night after closing. Do as you wish, but I'll rely on you to act as the shopkeeper temporarily for now.'

This was the conversation he had with the shopkeeper of the "Three Backs" bar and restaurant in Ueno.

Even though it was simply chatting, on a day when there were only regular customers present, Yanagi-san left while his shop was in business and went over to his friend's, really leaving Godou in charge as the substitute shopkeeper.

Although Yanagi-san really was a great guy, he did occasionally act ridiculously like that, Godou recalled.

"Indeed, perhaps we do not quite understand the standards of 'normal' with respect to Japanese high school students."

Liliana sighed with a gloomy expression. Next to her, Yuri also surveyed the interior of the shop with a worried look and said:

"Nevertheless, I do not believe working in this kind of shop counts as 'normal.'"

Yuri's gaze turned towards the numerous shelves filled with alcohol opposite to the cash register. These were collected by Yanagi-san over the past decade or two and included many precious and famous wines.

"It sounds a little ungrateful, but choosing this kind of place expressly to hold a study meeting is a bit too..."

"Clearly cannot be described as normal..."

As Yuri pointed things out, Liliana nodded in agreement. Godou began to panic.

"N-No, well. Because none of you seemed eager to go to someone's house. You all wanted to study outside. It's true I did feel slightly apprehensive about this place but under such conditions it shouldn't be a big deal, right?"

"Trying to muddle things through with a description of 'slightly,' how typical of Godou's excuses."

Erica entered the conversation after thoughtful consideration.

"Fundamentally, the fact that such a place was available as a choice is in itself rather unusual. Even though 80% of Godou's everyday life is spent in extraordinary circumstances, the remaining 20% never ceases to amaze others in his disposition towards abnormality. As expected of the god-slaying Devil King."

Hearing these unexpected words, Yuri and Liliana nodded firmly in agreement.

Hence, Godou's banner of "commoners representative, a simple high school student" was marred by the addition of a question mark, and thus the study meeting concluded.

This was a scene that occurred just as December and midwinter was arriving the very next day.

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## References

1. [↑](#) Izakaya(居酒屋): a Japanese drinking establishment that serves food to go with the drinks, often visited for after-work casual drinking.

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Generated on Wed Jan 22 12:47:20 2014